



Cardinal Newman School

Redefining Excellence!

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Office of the Principal

August 4, 2019

Dear Cardinal Newman Families:

As many of you are aware, there has been a recent incident involving a former student that rightfully has raised concerns among many of you for the safety and wellbeing of our Cardinal Newman community. I feel it is important to clarify information and provide the timeline surrounding the threatening videos that featured and were circulated by that former student.

On the afternoon of Saturday, July 13, we were contacted by a parent of a student who was included on a group text message that contained threatening racist videos. We contacted the Richland County Sheriff's Department about the videos that evening. Law enforcement immediately began an investigation into whether the racist videos constituted a criminal act and determined they did not. As the Sheriff's Department continued their investigation, we at Cardinal Newman also continued our investigation by interviewing the students who had received the videos and their parents.

On the morning of Monday, July 15, members of my leadership team met with the parents of the student in the video. Because we do not condone or tolerate racist or threatening behavior of any type, the parents were advised their son would be expelled; they chose to withdraw him from the school. We then told the parents in-person and in a letter that their son was banned from school property.

Over the next few days, school officials met with the students who received the videos via a group text and their parents. On July 17, following one of those meetings, a parent told school officials that she found another video on her child's iPad in which the former student threatened to "shoot up" the school. We, again, immediately contacted the Sheriff's Department; they arrested the teen that evening.

A number of parents have voiced concerns about why we did not contact them about these events sooner. First, the teen had been arrested and the threat had been neutralized. Second, due to the ongoing investigation by the Sheriff's Department and concerns regarding confidentiality of student information, we felt limited in what we could say publicly at that time. If, while all these events were unfolding, the school leadership team and/or diocesan officials believed the school community was in danger, we would have immediately communicated with you.

Redefining excellence is part of the mission at Cardinal Newman School. That includes respecting and protecting the dignity of all students. These videos are reprehensible and hurtful. We have already begun strategizing on how to provide additional diversity appreciation training for our faculty, students and community. As we continue to develop these

plans, we will involve and seek input from diverse members of our community to help move us forward.

Because we feel it is important for all parents to have an opportunity to get together and share their thoughts about this matter, I will be holding a town hall meeting on Thursday, **August 8** at 7:00 p.m. in the school auditorium. I, my leadership team and representatives from the Richland County Sheriff's Department will be on-site to respond to your questions. I hope to see you there.

In the meantime, I ask for your continued prayers for our students, teachers, staff and our broader Cardinal Newman family.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob A. Loia', written in a cursive style.

Robert A. Loia
Principal